

Information Pack: Remote Work & Digital Participation

Workshop Boundary Rule: *We are not here to re-diagnose structural barriers. Our focus today is strictly on co-designing viable, place-based pilot solutions for the Mid North and North West regions that helps individuals access employment through remote and/or hybrid arrangements that reduce dependence on transport.*

STRATEGIC OVERVIEW & THE LOCAL REALITY

Why This Pathway Matters

Hybrid and remote working arrangements enable transport-light participation in the job market, allowing people to participate in employment, training or education while reducing, but not necessarily eliminating, the need for regular physical travel. It is not intended to replace conventional transport solutions, nor is it suitable for every occupation or every regional community. Rather, it encourages participants to identify where workforce participation can be expanded by reducing unnecessary travel through innovation, technology and new ways of working.

This pathway aims to maximise workforce participation and regional economic activity by connecting people with productive opportunities in the most effective way. While physical mobility will remain essential for many occupations, reducing transport dependency may, in some circumstances, provide an equally effective, or even superior, pathway to workforce participation.

The Reality in Numbers

Based on a local community survey of 233 individuals who reported facing transport-related barriers to obtaining or increasing paid work:

- **78%** of survey respondents indicated they would explicitly consider working either fully or partly from home if suitable opportunities were available.
- **40%** of respondents reported that the primary constraint to transport-light work is the inherent nature of available jobs in the region.
- **39%** of regional participants identified a direct lack of suitable equipment or a dedicated workspace at home.
- **38%** reported a limited awareness of suitable transport-light opportunities.
- **30%** noted that limited internet access or poor connectivity reliability holds them back.
- **26%** identified a lack of digital skills or personal confidence as a primary barrier.

What We Heard From the Ground

"The whole online thing just creates another layer of barrier. The increasing shift towards online licensing, employment, and government services actively disadvantages vulnerable cohorts who lack face-to-face assistance."

"Employment opportunities in regional SA remain heavily concentrated in industries like agriculture, viticulture, and hospitality that fundamentally require physical attendance. Transitioning to a transport-light model requires more than just handing someone technology; it demands a cultural willingness among employers to adopt flexible ways of working, alongside real investments in digital capability."

CORE BARRIERS

Barrier 1: Employer Resistance & Cultural Lock-in

- **The Breakdown:** Productive remote and hybrid work relies entirely on management models built on output and trust rather than physical presenteeism.
- **The Regional Reality:** Many regional employers remain hesitant to adopt flexible or remote work arrangements. There is a prevailing cultural baseline that workforce productivity requires site-based attendance, alongside valid employer anxieties regarding how to maintain mentoring, supervision, and cohesive workplace culture from a distance.
- **The Impact:** Even when a jobseeker possesses the skills and hardware to work remotely, local vacancies are rarely advertised as flexible. This artificially limits the local job pool, forcing jobseekers back onto struggling regional transport networks or excluding them from the workforce entirely.

Barrier 2: Digital Infrastructure Deprivation & Resource Scarcity

- **The Breakdown:** Transport-light participation requires a stable baseline of digital infrastructure, including reliable high-speed internet, appropriate hardware, and an environment conducive to productive focus.
- **The Regional Reality:** Regional South Australia suffers from persistent blackspots and poor internet coverage, rendering data-heavy applications unusable. Furthermore, low-income households frequently lack the capital to purchase modern computers or lack the physical space for a dedicated, quiet home workspace. This is compounded by the fact that public computer access has contracted due to reduced library resources.
- **The Impact:** Jobseekers are functionally locked out of online education, digital service delivery, and remote employment. It creates an inequitable divide where those who would benefit most from reducing transport dependency are the least logistically equipped to do so.

Barrier 3: The Digital Literacy & Navigation Deficit

- **The Breakdown:** As recruitment, training, and government compliance move onto digital platforms, candidates must possess navigate-ready digital literacy, strong operational confidence, and functional literacy skills.
- **The Regional Reality:** A significant cohort of vulnerable jobseekers—including early school leavers, certain First Nations individuals, and older workers—face low functional literacy and numeracy skills. Navigating complex online job portals, virtual induction pathways, or remote training software proves completely overwhelming without dedicated human support.
- **The Impact:** Vulnerable individuals withdraw from the employment ecosystem out of shame or frustration. Rather than acting as a gateway, digital systems become an invisible gatekeeper, turning transport-light pathways into a source of exclusion rather than opportunity.

THEMATIC PATHWAY 5

TRANSPORT-LIGHT PATHWAYS TO WORKFORCE PARTICIPATION



**INDIVIDUAL SEEKING TO PARTICIPATE IN
WORK • TRAINING • EDUCATION • ECONOMIC LIFE**
In Regional South Australia and Beyond



KEY QUESTION

Can workforce participation be increased
without increasing transport dependency?



TRADITIONAL MOBILITY PATHWAYS Higher transport dependency

- Driver licensing and licence retention
- Vehicle access and affordability
- Passenger transport (bus, train, ferry)
- Community transport and dial-a-ride
- Shared mobility and carpooling
- Active transport (walking, cycling, e-bikes)



TRANSPORT-LIGHT PATHWAYS Lower transport dependency

- Remote employment
- Hybrid work arrangements
- Home-based enterprise and self-employment
- Local business and micro-enterprise
- Online education and training
- Virtual interviews and digital recruitment
- Digital services and online gig work
- AI-enabled and technology-enabled work
- Local work hubs and co-working spaces
- Care economy and community-based work

Many people
use a mix of
both pathways



WORKSHOP IDEAS

CROSS-CUTTING EQUITY CONSIDERATIONS



Equity & Access



First Nations



CALD
(Culturally & Linguistically Diverse)



People with Disability



Neurodiverse People



Carers & Caregivers



Youth



Older Workers



Affordability & Accessibility

COMMON ENABLERS THAT STRENGTHEN ALL PATHWAYS



Digital Connectivity



Affordable Devices



Digital Skills & Literacy



Flexible & Supportive Employers



Business Support & Emptoring



Innovation & Technology



Government Policy & Coordination



Local Leadership & Partnerships



Safe, Inclusive & Trusted Environments



OPTIMAL WORKFORCE PARTICIPATION WITH MINIMUM NECESSARY MOBILITY

Achieved through the most appropriate combination
of traditional mobility and transport-light pathways.

- Increased Workforce Participation
- Stronger Regional Productivity
- Greater Inclusion and Equality
- More Resilient Regional Communities
in Regional South Australia and Beyond

Not either/or, but the right combination for the right person at the right time.

DEFINITION



TRANSPORT-LIGHT PARTICIPATION

For the purposes of this thematic pathway, transport-light participation refers to forms of work, training and education that reduce—but do not necessarily eliminate—the need for regular physical travel by bringing productive activity closer to where people live through remote work, hybrid work, local enterprise, digital service delivery and other innovative approaches.

PRINCIPLE



Use the right mix of pathways to achieve maximum participation with the least necessary transport.

OUTCOME FOCUS



Participation, productivity and wellbeing—not the amount of travel.

A Framework for Thinking About Vehicle Access

EXISTING DIGITAL & REMOTE PARTICIPATION ASSETS IN SOUTH AUSTRALIA

Rather than relying on abstract concepts, newly proposed transport-light pilots should directly connect with, expand, or build upon the operational footprints of existing regional infrastructure and local study networks.

Program / Facility	Provider / Auspice	Target Group & Regional Reach	Support Provided / Key Operational Features
Uni Hub Spencer Gulf	Uni Hub Spencer Gulf Inc. (Community-owned and managed)	Remote tertiary students and upskilling workers in Port Augusta, Port Pirie, Kadina (Copper Coast), and Port Lincoln.	Free university study centres offering high-speed internet, dedicated computer spaces, Zoom/video facilities, exam invigilation, student mentoring, and direct links to local industry placement. Open 6 am to 12 midnight daily.
Port Augusta Business Centre	Port Augusta Business Centre Inc. / Business Port Augusta	Regional entrepreneurs, remote professionals, and small startup businesses in the Far North region.	Low-cost serviced office spaces, professional reception services, hot-desking, wireless internet, and an air-conditioned conference/training room equipped with digital wide-screen projection systems.
Regional Public Library Network	Local Councils & State Government	Vulnerable jobseekers, families, and early school leavers lacking technology at home.	Provides shared community computer hubs and local internet access, acting as an informal face-to-face first point of contact for navigating online government and licensing systems.
Remote Australia Employment Service (RAES)	NIAA / Regional Providers (e.g., Uniting Country SA)	Remote jobseekers across regional SA communities.	Replaced the old CDP framework to fund flexible, community-designed projects. It explicitly trials embedded language, literacy, and numeracy support to clear the digital blockages preventing remote participation.
Digitally-Enabled Shared Service Pipelines	Major Telcos & Financial Institutions (e.g., Telstra Regional Bureau models)	Regional residents with care or family commitments preventing long commutes.	Targeted decentralized hiring programs that consciously structure customer service, data management, and digital onboarding roles as "work from anywhere", routing urban corporate workflows to regional micro-cohorts.
Employment-Linked Digital Mentoring	Employment Service Providers (e.g., Workskil Australia / SYC)	Jobseekers facing system-navigation barriers.	Programs that pair participants with dedicated digital caseworkers to navigate online virtual inductions, handle digital ID retrieval, and provide remote software training before placement.

STRATEGIC INSPIRATION (WHAT WORKS ELSEWHERE)

To prevent duplication and identify clear integration points, any newly proposed pilot concepts must build upon, connect with, or address the gaps within the existing landscape of South Australian programs

Initiative & Location	Target Cohort & Reach	Operational Architecture (How It Works)
Regional Coworking & Innovation Hubs <i>(Victoria, Australia)</i>	Remote workers and local entrepreneurs across major towns in regional Victoria.	Deploys enterprise-grade digital systems, secure data lockers, hot desks, and modular meeting spaces alongside on-site local business coordinators. Utilizes state funding to convert underutilized community assets into tech-ready shared facilities.
Grow Remote Employer Partnerships Programme (EPP) <i>(Ireland)</i>	Traditional corporate managers and regional business owners hesitant to adopt hybrid or remote models.	A structured, government-subsidized training and certification program for managers. It teaches output-based performance management, remote onboarding, and how to maintain workplace culture digitally.
National Digital Inclusion Alliance <i>(USA)</i>	Vulnerable jobseekers, early school leavers, and mature workers who are overwhelmed by online job portals, virtual inductions, and digital ID retrieval.	Instead of self-guided online tech-training, this model embeds dedicated, human "Digital Navigators" into trusted community spaces (like local libraries or community health centers). They provide one-on-one, judgment-free support to help individuals step-by-step through specific digital compliance tasks.

CO-DESIGN PROMPTS & FOCUS AREAS

Table groups are required to use these direct prompts to develop practical pilot concepts and longer-term reforms within the Workshop Workbook.

1. **Overcoming Employer Resistance:** How can we co-design incentives or toolkits for local major employers to trial hybrid or remote roles? What frameworks can we provide to help them manage remote supervision and maintain workplace culture without requiring daily travel? Which specific major regional industries (e.g., administrative tiers of agricultural transport companies or regional health services) can commit to transitioning at least 20% of their data-entry, scheduling, or customer service tasks into a centralized local work hub pilot?
2. **Structuring the Local Work Hub:** How can we secure and equip a physical "Local Work Hub" or co-working space using underutilized community facilities or local library footprints? Who will supply the enterprise-grade internet and hardware needed to create an effective workspace away from home?
3. **Embedding Digital Literacy Support:** How can we integrate digital literacy, navigation assistance, and essential literacy/numeracy training directly into existing community support systems or TAFE courses? Who will act as the face-to-face guides to ensure vulnerable cohorts aren't blocked by online recruitment and onboarding systems?
4. **Selecting the Priority Target Cohort:** To maximise the immediate workforce participation benefit, who should receive priority? Should initial pilots focus on jobseekers, parents and carers, people with disability, First Nations communities, mature workers, young people, or other groups who may benefit most from transport-light participation?
5. **Creating Local Delivery Partnerships:** Which organisations are best placed to lead transport-light initiatives within your region? How can government, employers, education providers, community organisations and the private sector work together to create practical pathways into employment, training and enterprise?
6. **Sustaining the Participation Model:** Beyond initial pilot funding, how can transport-light initiatives remain financially and operationally sustainable? Could existing programs, local partnerships, shared digital infrastructure or employer contributions support long-term implementation?
7. **Informing Future Policy and Regional Reform:** While transport-light initiatives should be practical within existing policy settings, what evidence should be collected during pilot implementation to inform future investment, workforce policy and digital participation strategies across regional South Australia?